



Sec. 8 Minnesota Statutes 2004, section 125A.24 (PACs)

In order to increase the involvement of parents of children with disabilities in district policymaking and decision-making, school districts must have a special education advisory council that is incorporated into the district's special education system plan.

Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) Minutes Approved

Date: 10-05-20

Time: 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Location: Virtual meeting via Google Meet (This meeting will be video recorded to share with SEAC members unable to attend).

Attendees: Jackie Kelly, Marcy Doud, Amy Eelkema, Ashley Smith, Jennifer Krueger, Jessica Reese, Rhonda Morrison, Kathleen Morrison, Lynn Shellenberger, Mayra Mariscal, Melissa Weeks, Michele Silvester, Teresa Glass, Leslie Hitchens, Michele Sylvester, Rachel Sevlie, Superintendent Joe Gothard, Heather Jax, Hai-Yen Vo, Calton Sims, Danielle Matthias. 8 of 12 SEAC members, 5 guests, 9 staff

6:00 pm Welcome & Introductions

Welcome: Brief explanation of: What SEAC is and How it works.

Introductions/ Share/ Connect: Share your name if you're a member or guest, tell us a little about your student, where they attend school and "what is working in DL for your family" Why did you choose to attend SEAC tonight?" (Jackie would like to use and post on SEAC webpage along with member bios).

6:04pm Melissa Haley: Rhonda Morrison is stepping down from Co-Chair position and member role in SEAC as her family has changed school districts and will be joining as a guest occasionally in the future. Melissa Weeks accepted SEAC Executive member's invitation to fill Co-Chair position.

Mission Statement was shared.

6:10 pm [Introductions of members and attendees.](#)

6:15 pm Approve September minutes

6:55 pm (After Superintendent spoke) Amy Eelkema made a motion for the June minutes and September minutes to be approved. Melissa Weeks seconded. Motion carried.

Link to: [SEAC September minutes](#)

6:20 pm Check in with Superintendent Gothard

Dr. Gothard would like to hear from SEAC members.

6:21 pm Dr. Gothard addressed the group.

7/30 Gov. Walz provided safe to reopen guidelines. Included is a rubric based on a previous 14 day case rate I receive every Thursday morning. Elementary and secondary students could return

at this time, however the superintendent has to consider student ratios, if we have enough staff to support our students, etc. We would have to be problem solving in the moment so we are proceeding with stage I to keep the number of students and staff low initially slowly before proceeding to stage II.

6:28 pm Taking questions from the group.

24 different targets in our rubric. Indications that cases may be rising but we use other data factors that we use when making our decisions based on numbers and ratios. We have to be able to staff the needs of our students. We have been slowing ticking up, my wife is a case investigator for Covid for the state so we talk about Covid all day.

Member: *I saw the press release that talked about the teachers union. I know the district is ready for hybrid, but how can we do it if the teachers won't come back.*

Superintendent: *Labor and management can be a difficult relationship. The pandemic is unprecedented which has brought out challenges in our relationship. We are still not together on some issues. I have incredible respect for teachers but there are 22 other bargaining units in this district that we don't attend to the way we do the teachers. We need the teachers to come back and feel safe and supported. I want them back feeling ready to do their best work. Regarding HS students, most districts are starting with younger children first.*

Guest: *I am not an educator. I'm a parent and a nurse. What are the enrollment numbers for the district? Will that affect the dollars that are coming into the district? People who don't want DL have moved to private.*

Superintendent: *We predicted that we would be down 11,000 and as it stands today we are down 11,550 students. Our kindergarten numbers are really strong. Home schooling is an option many parents are opting for and students do not receive funding when that happens. We do have a chance for some rebound, some students to return, but we need to prepare and plan for the unexpected. We received 30M in federal funding but it's not great for recurring costs. The best way to manage recurring costs is to reduce staff.*

Member: *Has staff already been laid off?*

Superintendent: *We have a hiring freeze just based on strategy because it's not a good time to hire but we have not laid staff off. We're a family, we're a community and that's how I feel about it. I want to keep the staff together.*

Member: *One of the DL benefits is that I have been able to see his teachers and experience their talents and see how they are digging deep. They are stretching to do this work.*

Superintendent: *They are stretching to do this work but burnout is real and people are making this up as they go WHILE keeping their expectations for themselves and their performances high.*

Superintendent: *I received an email from a parent today sensing anger and frustration who said my communication has been terrible, so I'd like to know from you SEAC parents, are there things we've been missing? Are there things you have to go digging for?*

Melissa Weeks: *I disagree with that. I believe the district has done great with calls and emails and my child's team and teacher have been doing great. I have nothing but good things to say regarding the level of communication.*

Member: *Communication has been great. I don't always like what you have to say but you've been communicating enough and effectively.*

Guest: *I think a greater effort needed to be made that all communication needs to be in all languages. Centralizing all computer services was a big misstep because I used to know exactly who to reach at my building but waiting to hear back from central staff was not fast or efficient. The parent portal was much easier and the new system is not as user friendly.*

Last year we created the Office of Digital and Alternative Education but thank you for the feedback. Materials go out in 5 languages. There is a lag between the english version and the translated languages so that has been a challenge but we are getting better.

Superintendent: You have questions about High Schoolers and I wanted to let you know we will have "Academic Support Centers" that may be helpful to HS students. It won't be perfect but it should be helpful in supporting our HS students and families based on what our community needs.

Member: *Who should I direct my feedback to because DL is not working for my kid. He may lose this quarter and he may not graduate. These centers will open too late. The merry go round keeps going. I don't like getting calls telling me that my student is missing class. If I check him in at 7:00 am and maybe he slept all day or didn't go to class. Teachers not taking attendance doesn't work. I'm worried about the district not getting the money for my student because he didn't check in that day.*

Superintendent: *We don't take attendance for money. We use it to try and pinpoint resources to allocate money and teachers. It has to be a community effort to help your son between teachers, case managers, principals, etc. Everyone should be working together for him. If students are struggling we need to ask "Do we have the right people on the team"?*

Member: *Will licensed teachers, EAs and TAs be manning the support centers?*

Superintendent: *EAs, TAs and community experts will be there but our licensed teaching staff will be teaching. First one is opening at Washington.*

Superintendent: *I don't have all the answers and that doesn't always feel good and it impacts your children and I take that seriously. We want to do this hard work together and I really appreciate you all. I've heard some of your challenges, we know this is not ideal or what we want for our children. Please reach out to me anytime. Take care and be safe.*

6:50 pm Executive Functioning with AT Review & Tip of the Month with Teresa Glass

Members consider sharing: What did you learn that you tried with your student? What would you like to learn more about?

6:56 pm Does anyone who was here last time want to share what they learned?

Member: *I live in Saint Paul and many of my neighbors have SPSS students. I've been sharing the tips I learned from you about a month ago, being able to lock in apps that students would be working on. I have parents who are thrilled with this feature that they had no idea was an option for them.*

Teresa: Executive functioning was a topic several people have mentioned.

Executive Functioning describes cognitive processes that Regulate, Control & Manage:

Planning, working memory, attention, initiation, verbal reasoning, inhibition, mental flexibility, task switching, monitoring of activities.

Executive Functioning Supports:

Popplet Lite App for Organization of Writing. It's a nice app for students who benefit from seeing and organizing their information before writing it.

Reminders of what we covered last time, expanded on those tips a bit.

Jackie: **using rituals or routines** to start the day, using the same phrase each morning to ground the student. **Using timers** will help prevent students from worrying about starting and ending topic/class times.

Teresa and Jackie are offering **Parent Assistive Technology (AT) Office Hours every Monday from 7-8 pm** to help families with AT. If those hours don't work for you there are many wonderful staff that can help families with AT. We can have ASD or DBD staff to come and present as well.

Contact Jackie for link to Parent AT office hours.

Link to Presentation: [Executive Functioning with AT Review & Tip of the Month](#)

***Parent AT Office Hours September Notes-** shared at bottom of minutes

7:20 pm Reviewing themes on Jamboard and ideas for this year's SEAC meeting topics.

7:22 pm Jackie Kelly: Four themes emerged at the June 2020 SEAC meeting when member's shared ideas for the 2020-2021 School Year on a Jamboard.

Jam Board Themes:

- Navigating the system
- Inclusion
- DL supports
- Mental Health/Social emotional learning

Attendees were given a chance to review ideas shared in June (the last meeting of 2019-2020 school year) and expand on the themes by adding ideas as possible topics for this school year's SEAC meetings.

*Navigating the system

Member: *Parents who attend SEAC may feel as if they are getting privileged information for their students by attending these meetings so how do we get this information out to the rest of the parents/families who don't attend SEAC. Everyone should be able to have access to the topics and information that we cover. How can we reach out to SPED families.*

Member: *Case managers do communicate some of this information out to parents but only one school that my kids have attended really knew anything about SEAC.*

Jackie: There's an OSS Newsletter that goes out monthly to SPED staff. SEAC information can go out in that newsletter. Yearly, information is communicated to SPED staff regarding the meetings, dates, times, resources, etc to share with families. This year SEAC information was shared twice, in September and October. SEAC recommended a ConnectEd message and that did go out this year in August to all families. We'll keep trying.

Member: *The progress reporting may not need a whole lot of attending but maybe it needs to be that parents are mailed progress reports? Also access to supports in summer school is an issue. When a student is missing credits, they have to go to summer school but if they are not getting their modifications in summer school they can't make up their credits and that's a really big issue I feel.*

Hai-Yen shared many improvements to supports for students receiving Specialized Services during summer school.

*** Inclusion:**

Unified schools is something people are interested in. It would be fun to have a few students come to our next SEAC meeting to discuss unified schools.

Guest: *More representation from different groups within the schools.*

Member: *having students from the actual schools come and participate in sharing the information would be great. Where do they think there needs to be more representation?*

Marcy: The school community and student voice and representation is so important. With administration in the building supporting student based activities is exciting and powerful and can help other people get started.

*** Ideas for Distance Learning**

Member: *We talk about the hurdles every month. Any stage, any level, we should keep this as a standing agenda item and address tips that can help with DL. Hopefully it will only improve.*

Member: *I don't think it's been solved. Each HS is doing it differently and my student is getting less than 80 minutes per class. Class breaks don't give students a break from screens because they pick up their own devices. DL is the same or worse than it was in the spring.*

Member: *I've struggled with inconsistency the most. If your student has a great team then you are lucky. If your student does not have a strong team, meeting with multiple specialists has been so challenging. There have been improvements but it's not solved. I don't know where the bar is set right now. There are some educators who are putting in way more time, but there are some that aren't.*

Member: *80 minutes is 80 minutes. It's like Junior year light. The school district has been giving so little time to the students. They need to be getting more time in school. It's not enough.*

***Mental Health and Social Emotional Learning**

Member: *We probably ran out of time in June and this area seems to be an area that we need to spend some time on this year. I'm not sure who we would have come in but we need to get informed on what's happening around this now. I know it's a priority with Marcy. Who are some people who could come in and help SEAC and branch out from there.*

Marcy: *Michelle Keleny could come again or we could find someone either internally or externally to come in and help.*

7:45 pm Announcements/Events/Resources

-October is National Bullying Prevention Month - How can SEAC support these efforts in November? Please let us know if you have ideas or would like to be part of the planning.

Some ideas we have: Offering Pacer Center Puppets, Fidgety Fairy Tales, list of books for classrooms: Wonder, Sneetches, Special Olympics Young Athletes Unified Readers Books.

Link to: [PACER Center National Bullying Prevention Center](#)

Check out the amazing array of resources, website for younger students, website for teens, PacerTalks about Bullying videos, digital toolkit for Unity Day with posters and info. graphics.

7:50 pm

Marcy: In person testing of our students began today. Anything that couldn't be done virtually was delayed until fall. Harding Johnson OWL Washing Johnson Central Over 500 students will be tested so we can get caught up on initial referrals, transitioning at age 7. We are excited to start testing again.

Melissa Weeks: **SEAC FB Group**. Is private so you have to ask to be added. There's great information and we're trying to generate more discussion. Invite others, join yourself, share announcements, etc.

Jackie: **SEAC Chatter** is a way we share information and resources. Anyone is invited to share a resource. Most often emails shared are from different organizations with a broad range of topics. The email subject line is descriptive so you easily determine if you want to open, just delete or forward onto others in your community that would benefit.

7:50 pm Meeting Take-Aways

Members and guests share what they will take away from the meeting.

7:55 pm Checked in with folks who missed the introductions at the beginning of the meeting.

8:00 pm Adjourn

8:02 pm Meeting adjourned

***Parent AT Office Hours September Notes:**

9/28 Parent AT Office Hours with Teresa Glass

Idea to start the school day:

Parent modeling for student: "*Time for School- I put on my weighted blanket and sit on my cushion*"

"I can put on my ear plugs to get more focused."-Wearing headphones or earbuds is helpful for students when reading.

iPad Accessibility Features to try:

Go to iPad - then **Settings** - then **General** - then **Accessibility** - then **Spoken Content**- then **select Speak Selection turn on-** and **Speak Screen select turn on.**

Also **select the speaking rate that is comfortable.**

Remember to put finger on text then move bubble to include what you want read out loud.

Notability: can **use the text to voice** to have your writing read out loud. It can be helpful to hear what you've written.

Accessibility- Spoken Content- Speak Words. Enables Siri to:

"Remind Me"- For daily reminders such as turn in papers, or take a stretch break, lunch break, "remind me to take 10 calming breaths".

"Set a Timer"- To Shut down iPad- then tap timer- then select sound- then select sound- then select Stop playing. [This helps students with transition.](#)

[A TIMER ALLOWS STUDENTS TO REMAIN FOCUSED ON THEIR WORK INSTEAD OF THINKING ABOUT HOW MUCH TIME THEY'VE WORKED OR WHEN THEY CAN BE DONE. STUDENTS CAN ACCOMPLISH A LOT IN 20 MINUTES when focused.](#)

[Set a timer to work for 20 minutes.](#)

[Then set a timer to take a break for 4 minutes.](#)

[Repeat the cycle throughout school day.](#)

"Take a Picture" - tap home button & Off button at the same time to take a picture. Do this to take a picture of something you want to remember such as a screen the teacher shared.

Dictation- voice to text can help students get started when writing. For example " This is my report on weather".

Give instructions in steps: Ask your student's teacher or paraprofessional to give instructions in steps.

Don't forget to practice a of few of the above strategies to help your student be more focused and successful in school during Distance Learning; then let us know what you or your student liked best. Consider sharing out at the next SEAC meeting.

To create a First-Then Visual:

Contact Jackie and share your student's full name and school.

How many boxes you would like on the visual. Most visuals have 1-4 boxes.

Consider if there are visuals from your home you would like to use?

-Picture of your student getting a drink of water.

- Picture of your student with their pet dog or cat.
- Picture of your student at the park.
- Other visuals from home?

You're welcome to take a picture then send to Jackie It's best if photo does not have too much detail.

Your First-Then will be created and delivered to you.